

Industrial Worker Fall-Winter 2022

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Labor Day or May Day?

The Answer is Yes

By Douglas P. Marsh // Sept 2, 2022

“Resolved, that the first day of May of each year be designated as the Labor Day of this organization, and that the members of this organization be urged to cease all labor on that day and carry out exercises appropriate to such a day for the education of the working class as to their rights and interests on the economic and political fields.”

On the fifth day of the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, delegates debated the question of an official Labor Day for the organization. The first of May was chosen democratically, with the minutes showing a deep disgust felt by most delegates at the demonstrations of labor peace that had come to define the first Monday in September in the United States (here is a contemporary example). The dissenting minority argued from practicality. So much awareness and energy was already bound up in the national holiday that to pursue another day was folly, they said. Over a century later, both groups were right.

Workers in the US and Canada should, in general, join demonstrations on Labor Day in order to meet fellow workers where we can find one another. At every opportunity, we should join fellow workers to discuss what it means to be workers. May Day is not as widely observed, recognized, or known in North America as its nationally designated Labor Day. But it is and must remain the official Labor Day for our organization.

By and large, American workers are demobilized and unorganized. We quit before we form committees. Membership numbers fluctuate wildly among the many organizations trying to gather enough of us into one place to tap our dormant, collective power. Internally, growth

is enthused over and attrition rationalized away. Only a few principles distinguish the IWW from the many groups recruiting workers. In this environment, the best strategy for retention and potency is a well-defined organizational identity.

Workers in countries all over the world observe International Workers' Day on May 1, making the date more international than North American Labor Day. Maybe more importantly, May Day is less associated with the public displays of affection among union leadership, politicians, owners, and bosses that characterize North American Labor Day events. Keeping it as the union's official Labor Day fits the unique solidarity that the IWW advocates. From the IWW's founding, our design has been to join together workers from all countries, of all colors, genders, sexes, and all compatible inclusive and tolerant creeds.

Many of us in the US and Canada will work on Labor Day—responding to wage incentives or cost of living pressures, or because we are scheduled and expected like any other day. Many others will take a well-needed opportunity to relax. For the rest, the best activities would be to cheer on the former and motivate the latter. Let us not forget or take for granted the struggles and gains of workers who came before!

That said, Labor Day events in 2022 are being disrupted by ongoing public health concerns. Industrial Worker encourages readers to wish North American fellow workers a happy/fightin' mad Labor Day and to join us on the first of May as well. We support more days and not fewer “to cease all labor...and carry out exercises appropriate...for the education of the working class as to their rights and interests on the economic and political fields.”

Solidarity forever.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this article are those of the author. They do not purport to represent that of the IWW or Industrial Worker as a whole. Industrial Worker wishes all in North America and internationally, a happy Labor Day.

Xixón CNT Workers Arrested for Organizing

By Houston IWW General Membership Branch // Sept. 16, 2022

HOUSTON, TX—The Houston General Membership Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World is gathering at the Spanish Consulate to protest the unjust incarceration of eight union activists who work at La Suiza pastry shop in Xixón, Spain.

The workers at the La Suiza pastry shop had been organizing with the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labor) in response to wage theft and humiliating abuse at the hands of their employer. In response to their demands for better working conditions, their employer retaliated against them, falsely accusing them of criminal organization and extortion. The courts ultimately turned against the workers, who have all been incarcerated for their activities in unionizing their place of work.

The CNT will stand strong in the face of unjust and illegal retribution for legal demonstration, and the IWW will stand with them, because an injury to one is an injury to all!

Workers from around Houston will gather on Friday, September 16, 2022, at the Spanish Consulate, located at 1800 Bering Dr #750, Houston, TX 77057, from the hours of 9 to 11 A.M. CDT. The gathering will be a peaceful demonstration urging the Spanish government to let our fellow workers go free, and to recognize that demanding fair and dignified treatment from an employer is something every worker should be able to do, free from worry that they will have their freedom and their rights stripped from them.

The Xixón workers, seven of whom were disproportionately sentenced to three and a half years in prison for protesting, with the eighth sentenced to eight months in prison simply for taking a video of the incident, will not be left to fend for themselves.

"The Houston GMB is proud to stand with our fellow workers in the CNT. Working class solidarity doesn't end at any one nation's borders, or at any coastline. By demonstrating outside of the Spanish Consulate in Houston, we hope to shock the Spanish government into overturning the unjust and false ruling against these comrades. We want them to know that this isn't just a local affair that they can sweep under the rug by throwing everyone involved in jail. Workers all around the world are watching what the Spanish government does here, and we won't forget it."



On December 6, 2018, the IWW of North America voted to join the ICL. The IWW of Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and England did the same on September 11, 2021.

For more information, please contact Houston IWW Communications and Outreach Committee Chair Andrew F. and Fellow Worker Avon P. by email at houston@iww.org or by phone at (713) 730-9846.



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CASE CITATIONS i, Reagan v. Time, Inc., 468 U.S. 641, 648-49, 104 SCt 3262 (1984). "[T]he fact that society may find speech offensive is not sufficient reason for suppressing it. Indeed, if it is the speakers' opinion that gives offense, that consequence is a reason for according it constitutional protection." Hustler Magazine, Inc v. Falwell, 495 US 45, 46, 108 SCt 876, 882. The government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable, U.S. v. Eichman, 496 US 310, 319, 110 SCt 2404 (1990). "[A]bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content." Police Dept. of Chicago v. Mosley, 408 US 92, 95, 92 SCt 2286, 2290 (1972). ii, Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners Labor Union, 433 US 119, 97 SCt 2532 (1977). iii, Pell v. Procunier, 417 US 817, 822, 94 Set 2800, 2804 (1974). iv, Turner v. Safely, 482 US 78, 107 SCt 2245 (1987). v, Turner, supra. vi, Turner, supra. vii, Pickering v. Board of Education, 391 US 563, 573, 88 SCt 1731 (1968). viii, Abu-Jamal v. Price, 154 F3d 128 (3rd Cir., 1998); X v. Blatter, 175 F3d 378 (6th Cir. 1999)

Spontaneous Combustion:

Building a Committee After an Unplanned Direct Action

By Rybyn Z. // Sept 2, 2022

The meeting went off the rails when I got a text and an email from one of the Early Elementary Teachers. The managers were lying to our faces. Everyone must have gotten the same messages, because my coworkers' voices started to rise, their tone grew angry, and they stopped respecting management's "meeting norms."

Our in-person school year had ended a week before, but management insisted on a virtual "follow-up" meeting. So, everyone dutifully logged on at 9:00A.M. The Regional Director and his crony were waiting patiently. In an act worthy of Broadway, the District of Columbia, Maryland, & Virginia Regional Director, with a too-bad-so-sad tone, announced that our Principal and Assistant Principal had "left to pursue other opportunities." There was no one to replace them yet.

I work at a neighborhood charter school in Washington DC. Most students come from low-income or middle-income Black and Latinx families. Just a few months before I started working there, the board that owns the school switched charter management companies to a renowned national charter "turnaround" company based on the notorious Mind Trust's model. Often credited as creating the blueprint for privatizing urban education, it helped spawn the company that now oversees my school. Mismanagement, exploitation, and hypocrisy were in the company's DNA. Originally founded in Indianapolis (like the Mind Trust), the company grew until it spread all the way to Washington DC, where a charter market already thrives.

Staff, students, and families were already reeling from a traumatic year. So the announcement about the administration team blindsided us. While many of us did not like the Principal and Assistant Principal—or, like myself, believe we could do without them altogether—we all agreed that they cared for the school community.

Meanwhile, the company had nearly run the school into the ground through mismanagement and financial profiteering schemes. They fired Teachers while we were desperately understaffed, revoked already-earned bonuses for changing jobs, and did shady things to raise test scores. These were only the most glaring of a whole host of issues threatening to overwhelm and destroy the school.

So, we were all a little more than suspicious. The atmosphere was tense. A few staff members pressed the Regional Director for firm answers about

our former leadership team—and received dodgy replies. One of the workers then asked, “were they let go, or did they choose to leave?” over and over again. Eventually, the Regional Director paused for a few seconds, then—finally— said, “they chose to leave.”

That’s when I, and nearly everyone else, got the text message from the Early Elementary Teacher. It was just an image thumbnail. Inside was the Principal’s termination letter, sent by the director hosting the meeting.

It was too much. Under unbearable pressure, we exploded.

One of the Teachers opened with a salvo about the terrible, contradictory communication and chaos. She ended with, “the 4:30 dismissal time has got to go.”

Our “offer letters” (we don’t have contracts) specified our roles and hours. We all got paid for eight hours a day while the company enforced nine-hour days—and most Teachers worked longer to barely keep up with the crushing workload. All year, the workers had expressed disgust with these policies. Several times, workers took direct action against them. Most of the time, Teachers just refused to do the bullshit busy work admin gave out, and the company couldn’t do much about it. Thanks, Great Resignation.

Another worker, an English Language Learner Specialist, demanded to know if support staff who’d been thrown into different roles, sometimes multiple times a day, would be paid for their extra work. The Director kept sidestepping our questions. He said to get paid, they needed to pull the records from the overflowing staff group chat, where people begged for classroom coverage all year. Several workers then pointed out that this group chat, owned by the former Principal, was deleted. He had no answer for us, and we knew it. Even though we were on Zoom, I could feel the rage bubbling up..

The school’s Social Worker then cut the higher-up off, “you all have come into a community dealing with immense trauma without thinking about what the community needs at all. Where is the support from this company? We only see y’all once a month!”

This had been something that agitated everyone on the shop floor all year: the company flew a couple of rich white people into DC for two days each month, then straight back home. She laid into them for five more minutes.

As she talked, and as several Teachers came off mute to support her and launch into their own tirades, I realized this was an opportunity to unite the staff and build power. I’d built up a committee in the first few months of the school year that took some direct actions. But without a proper formalized structure beyond a group chat, the committee only

represented my immediate coworkers, and ultimately dissipated as understaffing at our school got worse and worse. It had felt like many workers at the school were content to take it on the chin and keep moving. That was incorrect. A deep rage extended across every grade band and role.

The task I'd struggled with was building a formal committee that met outside work hours. With the help of two external organizers from the IWW's DC, Maryland, and Virginia Education Workers Organizing Committee and the Southern Coordinating Committee throughout the year, I accumulated the knowledge and skills I needed to do that. Here was an opportunity to apply that knowledge.

I noticed that several people had replied to the email the Early Elementary Teacher sent, expressing anger and betrayal.



I hopped into the thread and sent a message venting my own feelings and asking if anyone wanted to form a group chat to discuss how to make a change in the workplace. Along with that, I whipped up a Google form asking for contact information and platform preference—about 10 people filled it out.

Workers were still on the meeting yelling at the Regional Director, by the way. The meeting was supposed to end by 10:00 am. It was now 10:30. Our Office Assistant took the mic.

"The old logo is still on the building, the same color scheme from before, too. How is this company going to support rebranding?"

The Director shifted a little bit, seemingly uncomfortable with giving us information about how the company works, "the operations team helps, but really it's up to the school board."

The worker shot back, “We need an action item here. You said operations, does that mean the school leadership, the board, or the company makes that decision? I’m leaving so *someone else* needs to connect those dots.”

She received vocal and written support from staff, and kept pressing her demand until management caved and agreed to weekly meetings with worker input.

Soon, staff members turned to berate management for abandoning us. No counselor, no substitutes, and a stream of overworked, underpaid staff members running for the door had taken their toll. Our Social Worker spoke out again, “We desperately need a counselor. Why do we not have a counselor?”

“It all depends on enrollment, I’m sorry to say. That’s where the funding comes from, and with the school in a deficit, we can’t afford to backfill positions.”

One of the Teachers—a 20-plus-year teaching veteran not to be played around with—took her turn to criticize not just the company, but the invisible board who hired them.

“I see where they’re all coming from. We felt like the stepchild of the company, like we were never a part of it as a school community. And it feels like that with the board, too. I feel like they never see the work teachers are doing in the building. We need to let the community back into the building to see what’s going on. We need a commitment to a Counselor.”

“It all depends on enrollment...”

Meanwhile, I was setting up our committee’s group chat and collaborating with coworkers to set up the infrastructure to keep ourselves together over the summer. I gathered their non-work contact information.

The same Teacher responded to the Director’s vague answers: “We don’t know where any of this information comes from! Why is there no money? Are we non-profit or for-profit? I know y’all probably came into DC thinking this was a hot money-making market for you with all the charter schools. But you don’t seem to realize that these other charter companies at least offer more resources. Two Rivers, DC Prep, and Friendship do that, why not y’all?”

I called the company out for doing nothing to cover the school’s deficit. Enrollment numbers had dropped over the pandemic, meaning less funding from the DC government while expenses rose. The higher-up and I got into an exchange where he tried to evade my questions, and I kept bringing up the same points. He fell back to the same “it’s up to the

board, government, and enrollment,” line, so I went back on mute to allow others to speak.

Two more staff members aired grievances about being thrown into different positions with no warning. At that point, it was 11:00, and the Regional Director claimed he had another meeting he had to join. I wonder what he said about us afterward.

There are a couple of lessons to draw from this experience. One, that having a formal committee that represents the workplace is essential. Two, spontaneous direct actions by workers can win gains and catalyze a solid organizing committee.

During the 2021–2022 school year, my coworkers and I were able to win certain concessions from management through loosely coordinated direct actions. For example, our ex-Principal imposed an attendance policy that collectively punished the staff for the late arrivals of only a few (and those workers were only late consistently because of terrible conditions). Throughout the next day, groups of workers would go down to the office to protest—spurred on by everyone else cheering them on. We won.

Even so, most of the tangible organizing only happened in my department—the 3–5th grade instructional team. Within our own circle, we were strongly critical of the principal. Eventually, one of the 3rd-grade teachers even led us in writing up a formal complaint against them. But after consolidating a committee representing K–2, 3–5, Para-Educators, and Food Service Staff, I discovered there was a significant minority of staff who loved our Principal and Assistant Principal. Seeing the two of them quitting was what agitated them enough to take action and join the committee in the first place. Without a formal workplace-wide committee, we couldn’t see that. I had to readjust my perspective.

Our spontaneous actions made a difference. This year, we have an official eight-hour workday, more robust curriculum support, and a seemingly much more competent leadership team. Less concretely, management has tread a lot more lightly around us. It’s obvious they want to do more to control and discipline their human capital stock, but can’t because they know we might bite back, and hard.

Not only that, but the committee I formed survived the summer, has a meeting schedule, and is actively gathering contacts in preparation for one-on-one conversations as I write this. Summer whittled us down from ten to five, but I had my first one-on-one just the other day, and management has started to act like their old selves again, so I’m predicting that will change soon.

Seattle Worker Rises, Empowers Working Class

By Meggie Kessler // Aug. 12, 2022

Illustration by John Fleissner

SEATTLE—In the Pacific Northwest, one newspaper is gaining ground in its historical struggle to empower workers.

Formerly known as the Industrial Worker, the Seattle Worker reestablished printing on May Day 2018, with the goal of emancipating the working class from its chains of capitalism.

“We want to inspire, educate and empower the working class to self-organize,” says Kristin, the Editor of Seattle Worker. “We want to recruit members into the Industrial Workers of the World, and we want to share concrete tips for actually how to organize. We want to really make the dream achievable.”

The mission of the Seattle Worker remains the same today as when it first started, according to Kristin.

“To inform, educate and collaborate with fellow workers and empower them—those were the original goals—and I think it’s pretty much the same now,” she says. “The part about the everyday struggle with capitalists that the Seattle Worker tries to do is organizing the working class for self-empowerment.”

William Clayworth’s story “How I joined the IWW” in the Feb/April 2021 edition of the Seattle Worker, is, in Kristin’s eyes, one of the inspiring examples of the good work they are doing.

“It was a story of coming to the IWW and learning that he had power against the bosses,” Kristin says. “That moment when people realize that they are in power and they don’t have to take it is just really awesome.”

When it was first published in 1906, Industrial Worker took turns publishing out of Seattle, Spokane and Everett, according to the University of Washington’s IWW History Project, “The Industrial Worker” by Chris Perry and Victoria Thorpe. It was printed there until 1931, when it was moved to IWW headquarters in Chicago and remained there until 1975.

“During this early part of the IWW’s history, there was an active policy of repression enforced upon the Wobblies by the government,” writes the IWW History Project. Wobbly persecution during this period contributed to the paper’s continual movement, and explains why the paper went unpublished for almost three years.

Authoritarian aggression worsened in November 1916 when the IWW planned to support and speak publicly at a workers' strike in Everett "to be held on a spot commonly used by street speakers," according to the Everett Public Library.

More than 300 IWW members sailed from Seattle to Everett, hoping the group of striking workers would join the One Big Union, but they were met on the docks by armed capitalist law enforcement, according to an article reprinted in

Hellraisers Journal, originally published in *The One Big Union Monthly*, Nov. 1920, which now appears on WeNeverForget.org, a website dedicated to labor martyrs.

"Wobblies began street speaking during a local shingle weavers' strike, encountering suppression by local law officers," says the Everett Public Library. The number of IWW supporters increased as the violence from capitalist law enforcement grew until their hateful brutality caused the deaths of at least five workers and injured 50 more.

"This was the last major free speech fight in the Pacific Northwest," says the IWW History Project. By the 1920s, the IWW had gone from being publicly accepted to operating in a more underground manner.

In the aftermath of the "Everett Massacre, Industrial Worker nearly went unpublished until the late '90s, when "the branch started having a monthly newsletter for members, which went on until the early 2000s," says Kristin.

Inspiration to resurrect the Seattle Worker came to Seattle's IWW branch at a very exciting time of rapid growth for the union, she says.

Kristin's most enjoyable moments at the Seattle Worker have been meeting people and working with authors and committee members. Still, her favorite experience was when she interviewed David Tucker about his mentor Carlos Cortez, artist, poet and former Editor of *Industrial Worker*.



“I just love that I was able to get a feel for his personality,” says Kristin. “People are at the heart of the IWW, and I just love stories about people.”

Kristin aims to keep the Seattle Worker sustainable and avoid the fate of predecessor papers.

“A lot of publications don’t last very long,” she says. “They tend to fold. We’ve been going for four years, so my general goal is to keep it sustainable—let’s shoot for ten.”

Seattle Worker articles can be found for free on their website (<https://seattleiww.org/seattle-worker/>), as can a series of Organizer Trainings to help workers organize their workplaces.

To become a supporter of Seattle Worker, visit their Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/seattleworker>).



Kim Kelly’s FIGHT LIKE HELL

By Justin Mason // Sept, 23, 2022

“Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor” is not your average labor book. Kim Kelly manages to transcend the dry chronology typical of the genre by drawing the reader into each unique story of struggle before tying them all together with the common thread of solidarity unionism. In a surprising mix of rigorous history, labor journalism, and an organizer’s optimism, Kelly lays out the myriad obstacles workers have faced throughout America’s past. She shows how, time and again, they have joined together to thrust labor forward into a new paradigm. At every turn, the reader is invited to share in Kelly’s passion for the labor movement, and every new story she unearths becomes another signpost for the struggles ahead.

Industrial Worker recently spoke with Kelly, a labor journalist and fellow Wobbly, about her book, her work chronicling the labor movement, the past and present of the IWW, and how we can come together in solidarity to elevate workers everywhere.

Industrial Worker: Obviously, there have been histories of American labor written before. Your book focuses especially on the contributions of marginalized communities to the labor successes of past and present. Can you tell me how the book took shape?

Kim Kelly: I see it as a continuation of what I’ve been trying to do with my Teen Vogue column and with the other work I’ve been doing in the labor journalism space, basically trying to uplift and center the voices of marginalized workers and workers whose labor is criminalized, workers

who don't necessarily get past the microphone as much as they should. And when I had the opportunity to write a whole book, I was really excited to find as many of these folks as I could and pack them all into one place to make it accessible and hopefully fun to read so that people could page through it and hopefully find themselves reflected in the pages,

IW: There are a ton of characters in [the book]. The labor leaders you write about range from the well-known, like Mother Jones and César Chávez, to the lesser-known, like Maria Moreno and Miss Major Griffin-Gracy. What were some challenges or surprises you found while investigating the more obscure figures?

KK: A lot of the folks in the book, they were kind of lost or obscured or tucked away because they were too radical, or too Black, or too Asian, or too brown, or too female, according to their contemporaries. It seems like it's always been easier for people to elevate, you know, straight white guys who were also involved, but maybe were building on the labor of a lot of other types of people who didn't get the attention they deserved. [It] makes it a lot harder for people like me, decades or centuries later, to dig through and find out their stories and what really happened. Because so much less value is given...to the voices of marginalized workers, and so much less effort is put into preserving our stories. So it was kind of like a treasure hunt, striving to find as much as I could. And I feel like I could have written a thousand more pages if only I'd had the time.

IW: One of the most compelling aspects of the book is how each story shows the fundamental importance of intersectionality and inclusion to the cause of solidarity. This is a crucial concept in today's labor struggle, but your book shows that these principles have always contributed to American workers' victories. How can these stories help inform current organizing efforts?

KK: Sometimes the most important lessons are the simplest and I guess the hardest for some people to put into practice. The biggest thing I wanted to come through in this book—well, there's a couple of major themes—but one of the biggest ones was how diversity and differences can be our strength instead of a weakness. That a multi-racial, multi-gender, multi-ethnic, multilingual, multi-generational, multi-everything organizing is how we're going to win, it's how we've won before. And that's what's driving this current new wave of enthusiasm and energy we're seeing in the labor movement.

This is how we win. It's how we've always won. Giving into the politics of exclusion or bigotry...giving in to that kind of division, that's just doing the boss's work for him. That's something I really hope comes through in the book; just how much stronger we are when we really care about one

another, when we work together, and we don't let ourselves be distracted by false divisions.

IW: It comes through really well. I think if people take nothing else away from the book, it's that concept. Our readers will be thrilled to learn you spent a good deal of time talking about the IWW. You write, "The Industrial Workers of the World, more than any other union in U.S. history, has sought to exercise the power of a union not merely to serve its own members, but to shatter the exploitative systems on which this country was constructed," would you share a quick rundown of the obstacles the IWW has had to overcome since its formation?

KK: So many...It really is incredible that the IWW is still here and is still so active and is still winning, because the U.S. government has put so much effort into crushing it over the years!

I think most people reading this are probably familiar with that period around World War I and leading up to it—when we saw the U.S. government launch what's known as the Palmer raids—where they swept up hundreds of Wobblies, as well as other labor organizers and leftists, and anybody who was seen or perceived to be any kind of threat to the established order. Any kind of anti-war voice, anti-authoritarian voice, anybody who wasn't just blindly following this mandate of "we're going to go to war, and it's going to be great," hundreds were swept up and imprisoned and repressed within an inch of their lives.

During that period, so much of the union's resources and archives were destroyed. We had agents raiding IWW offices and burning their papers and shutting them down. It was an active, targeted campaign against the IWW, specifically because we were such an anti-capitalist, anti-racist force, and because so many of its members were so vociferous in their opposition to the War, to war in general and to capitalist exploitation; things that the government wants its loyal subjects to support.

Having the full force of the U.S. government come crashing down on top of your union is going to have an impact. Having tons of your most effective and popular organizers...surveilled and jailed is going to have an impact. That period really did a number on the union's strength. It really shook the union. But it didn't kill it. It didn't destroy it. The government didn't win. It just took a long time to build things back up. And I suppose we're still kind of trying to build things back up to the union's peak.

Learning more about that history is always a thrill. Learning about the people that were part of it: Bill Fletcher, Marie Equi, Frank Little, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Lucy Parsons, all of these big, revolutionary, fiery personalities. It's sad that they aren't better known within the mainstream labor movement because we need as many real heroes as we can get.

And a whole lot of them have been in the IWW. It's just perhaps not politically convenient for folks to recognize that.

IW: So many of those figures are really engaging, it makes for a very entertaining and inspirational read. The IWW is at the forefront of the recent labor revival, helping workers organize across countless industries. What do you think is the biggest challenge for the IWW as the labor movement continues forward?

KK: "Honestly—and this is just an opinion that I've actually held for a long time; I still don't fully understand why the IWW is treated as this sort of outlier or afterthought by a great number of people in the mainstream labor movement—outside of the AFL-CIO because we've been here for just as long, if not a lot longer than many other active unions, been an incredibly important part of labor history as well as labor's present.

As you mentioned, there are really effective and interesting organizing campaigns being led by Wobblies. There are a lot of dual-carders out there too, I'm surely not the only one. We're part of the fabric of this movement and always have been. I don't know if it's a PR problem, or people just not knowing their history, or people just spending too much time with mainstream Democrats and not realizing that there are still radicals in American labor. But I think it really is to the detriment of the greater labor movement that the IWW isn't given as much due and as much attention and as much respect as it deserves.

And I'm not sure how we get past that. I'm not sure that many Wobblies are really that interested in getting respect and playing footsie [with] the mainstream labor movement. If they were, they'd probably be part of that instead, right? But I think especially as we're seeing this movement kind of change and expand, as work and labor itself change and expand, and as younger and more diverse workers come to the forefront... There's a reason that the IWW is the union of choice for some of the people leading this charge. There's a reason that people are turning to its principles of true worker solidarity, and direct democracy, and solidarity unionism, and you know, causing a little bit of a ruckus.

There is a whole lot that today's labor activists can learn from the IWW, and there's a lot... that Wobblies can learn from this new emerging, other type of independent union that we're seeing blossom. I'm sure there are a lot of intersections between our different perspectives and philosophies that we can explore in a way that really helps workers. I just think it would be better for everybody if we found ways to kind of bridge these divisions without abandoning our principles, and find ways to work together with the bigger movement.

Even if the bigger movement doesn't recognize our importance, that doesn't mean that it can't benefit from our wisdom and militancy. And

there's got to be a way to bring people together that doesn't, you know, compromise or sacrifice the most important things. I'm not sure how we do it, but I'm hoping that I'm not the only person who's thinking like that.

Kim Kelly's *"Fight Like Hell: the Untold History of American Labor"* can be purchased at the IWW Store (<https://store.iww.org/shop/fight-like-hell/>). Kelly writes about labor for Teen Vogue, The Baffler, More Perfect Union, The Nation, The Real News Network, Rolling Stone, and many more outlets. You can follow her on Twitter @GrimKim



Burgerville's Union Racking Up Victories on Shop Floor

By Callum Hannawalt // Jul. 1, 2022



Last December, The Industrial Workers of the World's Burgerville Workers Union (BVWU) signed their first collective bargaining agreement with management, officially becoming the only fast food restaurant in the country covered by a federally recognized contract. This historic win comes as the culmination of three-and-a-half years of heated negotiations with management, seven strikes, and dozens of major picket lines. Over 75% of workers covered by the contract participated in the vote, with 92% in favor.

The contract brings major gains to the five Portland-area stores with federal union recognition such as a grievance process, a three-month set schedule, and paid parental leave. Additionally, some improvements like free shift meals and paid holidays were won for workers at other locations of the Vancouver, WA-based fast food chain. "The part of the contract that I think that we're all very proud of is we were effectively able to force the employer to bargain sectorally with us, so that the gains that our members got also damn near all [sic] the other shops got," says Mark Medina, union representative, "Which means we were able to get those benefits for not just our members, but the other 1600 employees at that company, which is a benefit to everybody."

Organizing has continued in the months since the ratification vote. Soon after signing the contract, workers petitioned the company to provide them with free KN95 masks as well as COVID-19 testing for anyone suspected to have been put at risk on the job. "And within days we got that," stated Medina. "Shop stewards did this, workers did this, they self-mobilized and that's a wonderful thing."

On top of this, training and preparation for shop stewards have been underway in anticipation of the renegotiation slated for next year. "I think it's equally instrumental to get better concessions—more things for workers to meet the needs that workers want—and to value that democratic voice," Medina said. While negotiations are expected to begin a few months prior, the contract officially reopens on May 1 next year and workers are already preparing for the possibility of striking that day. "I would love nothing more than a quick amicable negotiation where we get what we need. But I'm not going to hold my breath for that," says Medina.

BVWU is looking to continue expanding to other Burgerville locations, as well as building solidarity with other organizing efforts in the city. "In Portland when workers think of food service organizing they recognize our campaign and the victories of that and they want to replicate that in their workplaces," Medina says, adding "I definitely think that we played a role in the consciousness changing that food service workers can organize and that their jobs can be dignified."

According to Medina, the ratification of the collective bargaining agreement is one of the latest victories in a resolute campaign that shows no sign of slowing down. "This contract is just a first step. It's just a foundation, and we're going to build upon it," he added. "I think workers are very proud of what they've been able to accomplish, and I'm proud to have been on the ride with them."

RIPPLES OF A LIE

an Interview with Esther Barnett Goffinet

By Collin Morrin // Sept. 9, 2022

The so-called “Centralia Massacre of 1919” is a landmark event characteristic of the rising tides of agitation and class conflict marking the years following World War I. During the first Armistice Day parade in Centralia, Washington, a group of vigilantes from the American Legion raided the local Industrial Workers of the World union hall that had become a magnet for suspicion and repression by local business interests and its elites. The resulting gunfight left six dead and led to the infamous lynching of Wobbly Wesley Everest.

To this day, the American Legion blames Wobbly Eugene Barnett —father of the book’s author Esther Barnett Goffinet—for opening fire. The book *Ripples of a Lie* corrects the historical record and tells the story of that fateful day and the effects it had on the life of Eugene Barnett, who got caught up in the course of events and put on trial and subsequently railroaded by the local prosecutor for his alleged participation in the shooting.

Esther Barnett Goffinet spoke to *Industrial Worker* about her father’s and his fellow workers’ tragic lives. This interview has been edited for style and clarity.

Industrial Worker: When writing this book, what kind of story were you trying to tell?

Esther Barnett Goffinet: My father, Eugene Barnett, was an unarmed union man standing in the window of the Roderick Hotel during the raid on the union hall in Centralia, Washington, on November 11, 1919. Barnett was an eyewitness who could not be allowed to talk. He was accused of being the actual shooter of the soldier who led the raid, framed, and buried alive in prison along with seven other innocent union men.

Ripples of a Lie is a biography and labor history book on Eugene Barnett, but it’s actually much more than that because it includes his family and the other prisoners in order to tell his story. It is written as a narrative, in story form that makes history come alive, until the epilogue which is written in the first person, me.

IW: What inspired you to write the story of your father?

Barnett Goffinet: I am a registered nurse not a writer. But I am also a daughter and I knew I had to write this book for my children and grandchildren. There are many books and articles in the library and elsewhere about the well-known Centralia Massacre.* Only the book *The Centralia Conspiracy* by Ralph Chaplin is true and written by someone who was actually there as it happened and who knew many of the people involved. *Ripples of a Lie* is the only book written by a family

member, or from the prisoner's perspective, and by someone who actually knew several of the characters involved, the only book that tells the full story, and finally, it's a book that tells the whole truth.

Born in the mountains of North Carolina to poor sharecroppers, Gene was the oldest of eight children. His father was also working out as a carpenter making five cents per day. Encouraged by the promise of "good pay and good schools" for his children, Gene's father moved his family to West Virginia to become a coal miner. The "good pay" was \$0.50 a day for 14 hours of work, 200 feet underground in deplorable conditions. In many families, the children starved to death while their fathers worked those long hard hours. They would expect to lose at least one in four children.

In most families, like mine, the oldest children were sent to work to help support the family. Some working children were as young as five years old. They were Rock Pickers, hired to pick rocks off the tracks so the rail cars wouldn't wreck. Many children died in accidents and those who didn't were treated very cruelly, beaten by the guards if they ever stopped to play, or didn't meet their work quotas. This left a lasting impression on my father. Eugene Barnett was not quite eight years old when he was sent to work in the mines. As one of the "older children" he was a "Trapper Boy", opening and closing the big tarp to keep air in the mine.

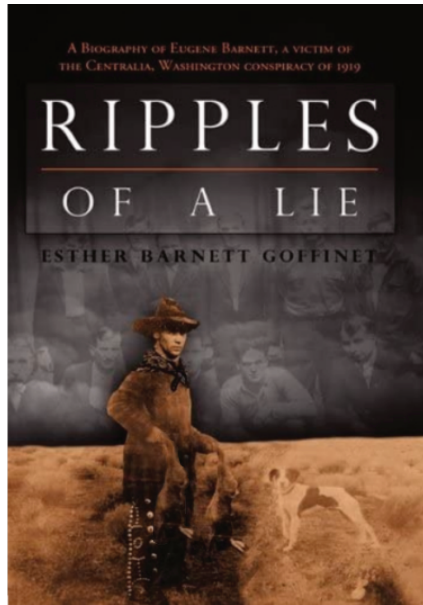
Gene met Mother Jones, the union supporter and activist who protected union members from anti-union thugs, and hearing her speak a few times, he became interested in the unions. He proudly joined the United Mine Workers at age 14 and worked toward better and safer working conditions for the rest of his life. My book includes wages, prices, working and living conditions throughout all those years.

IW: What lessons can contemporary organizers and ordinary working people draw from your father's story?

Barnett Goffinet: I hope that contemporary organizers and ordinary people who read *Ripples of a Lie* will gain a better understanding of unions and why we need them, how and why they were formed and what our parents and grandparents lived through in order to give us the advantages we have at work today. It was my father's greatest wish to clear his name and the more people who know the truth about the Centralia incident, the better. We, the families of the prisoners, don't say "massacre;" that is part of the lie. There was no "massacre" unless they mean the massacring of those eleven union men who were dragged out from the jail that night, beaten, and burned alive in the mill's incinerator. This is not a forgotten issue and the cover-up to protect the town's elite still goes on to this day.

IW: What did you learn when researching and writing this book?

Barnett Goffinet: I have always known the Centralia story and was fortunate to know some of the prisoners and their families. My father saved his legal papers, letters, and pictures from much of his life and other children of the prisoners sent me information their fathers had saved. They were excited that I was writing a book and we all wanted the whole world to know our fathers were innocent. Now there are two books at the library telling the truth.



It has been a real advantage and fun for me to be a nurse when writing about all the historical medicine and treatments described in my book. I have learned a lot by doing this, not only about publishing, which almost drove me over the edge but about history in general. For example, I never realized the reason city blocks were ever invented was because there was no indoor plumbing. The houses were built around a small square area with the community outhouse in the middle for all the block families to use. I had heard the expression “work until you hit pay dirt” but didn’t know that it came from coal miners who were not paid anything for their labor, only for the coal.

